5/26/79

Dear Jim, Judy and all,

From my recent experiences you have been on my mind from time to time, when I've not been pushing to complete another long affidavit in a different case. (Got it off to my lawyer last night.)

No two people, their anatomies and their medical cases need be alike and I'm not trying to tell Jim what to do. But I was concerned when he said he'd discontinued the coumaden on his own.

There are hazards from it. One can come from too much drinking, which cut me back. From my experience there are hazards from not having it. When I was off of it new problems set in. After some examinations and after I was put back on it I did ever so much better.

One of the hazards is internal bleeding. After all the time I was on it, high dosage, too, I didn't bleed until April 20. The doctor took me off of it right away and started watching the blood, examined me and made arrangements for a consultation with one of the best specialists in the country. By the time I could get to see him and his delayed report reached the doctor here and he could arrange for a test he didn't want to make without this second opinion a month had past. I fell back much during that month. Not at the beginning but by the end.

There can be complications from tests. This is no sugar-coating. As soon as this one was past I started on the coumaden again. And I'm still a little uneasy each time I urinate, fearing what I saw before, which looked like all blood. (A shot of Vitamin K stopped it in about 6 hours.) But now that I've been back on it a week I can tell you I feel better despite a new problem and I've lost or at least am losing the swellings in both legs that set in when I was off it.

The medical question was eliminating the kidneys, or some abnormality in them as a possible cause of the bleeding. To do this they take X-rays before and after injection of a radioactive dye. I'd had that before, I thought, in both legs when I was hospitalized, so when the doctor warned me there could be a reaction to the dye I never gave it a second thought. He had the results of this thing they call an intravenous pilogram a little more than 24 hours after it was over and told me that all was normal. He asked how I was and I was okay. But by that night I had a large lump above when they made the injection on the right arm. It got larger and harder. The long and short is that the reaction to the dye was injury to another vein, this one in the arm. Not particularly uncomfortable but a little annoying, as is the limitation of use of it to what does not irritate it or cause unusual discomfort. Have to put hot wet packs on periodically and that is a nuisance, too. He thinks it will be a while before all swelling is gone and maybe the vein will stay like a tough cord. And thick as a pencil. (If it does, so what?)

So, there can be risks. But from my experience the greater risk is from not having the beneficial effect of the medicine on the blood. I can't give you any real explanation of the blood tests in technical terms but I can tell you this - that when I was off the coumaden for a month and then was back on it three days, as I was with the first blood test afterward, with whatever influence that had the clotting factor if that is what they measure was twice what it was once the balance was set and I was getting regular blood tests, by then reduced to once a month. I'm inclined to think that it thickens the blood when you have the problem that causes clots, or that in effect the coumaden also thins it so it can flow better.

I'm as certain as I can be that my problems in the arteries developed when I was off the coumaden for the first time and that along with it more clots developed in my right leg and foot. It is a risk that ought not be run by someone who decides to be his own doctor.

Another thing I'm sure of is that physical activity is the best medicine. I can't do as much but I feel better after I do it. ...Now to bed...There was oral argument before the appeals court in the case in which I used your affidavit. I expect a remand. If and when it comes if there is anything in it that will interest you I'll send you a copy. Hope you are all well and as happy as you should be. Best wishes,